



# Feeling Stuck? Get Inspired and Be Creative

By Christina Beard, CPSM, LEED Green Associate

As A/E/C marketers, our jobs require us to constantly create new things. Where does one continually find inspiration? With fewer opportunities to get fully enveloped into creative environments over this past year, we've had to be more diligent about getting our brains into a creative space.

For many of us, it's been hard to think outside the box. We've felt stuck in our cubicle or home office, with limited access to in-person events like concerts and networking get-togethers. Adding to that, increased demands on our time, as well as the constant barrage of digital meetings, have increased our stress levels. When we're stressed, it's harder to think creatively. So, what can you do to get unstuck and creative again?

First, make sure you allow yourself time to de-stress each day. Take a break. Let your mind be free of distractions for a set period of time, which means you have to put down your phone. By doing this, you'll return to the task(s) at hand with a fresh set of eyes and renewed energy. You can also schedule "get stuff done" time blocks on your calendar, so you'll have enough time to complete projects without the need to multitask. Then, implement some of my simple strategies today to find inspiration.

- **Train yourself to be innovative.** Almost everyone has heard the phrase, "there are no bad ideas." It's true. Develop a habit

of thinking about different and innovative ways to complete each of your tasks that may be more efficient or helpful. By consistently doing this, you can train your brain to automatically look for better ways to accomplish things. Write down your ideas—the more you can think up, the more likely you are to produce good ones.

Consider this: If each day you only generate ideas you think you'll use, and discard any potentially bad ones, you'll most likely settle for the first mediocre one to come along. Instead, if you put all your ideas on paper—the good, the bad, and the ugly—you have a higher probability of producing a winner.

- **Get outside.** Take your calls while walking outdoors and moving your body. Pause to reflect on nature, do a little people-watching, and breathe in some fresh air. Researchers have found that creativity surges while walking, and being outside is known to boost your mood, so this is a win-win.
- **Cast a wider networking net.** Make sure you connect with people outside your industry. Diversification is key. People outside our A/E/C circles can teach us so many things that will have a positive impact on our careers and companies, if we just give them a chance.
- **Find a brainstorming partner or team.** Bouncing ideas off others can be one of your greatest assets, and you can learn a lot



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from other people. Again, focus on developing a team or partnership with diversification in mind. Surrounding yourself with people who think differently than you, with diverse experiences and thought processes, can open your mind to a new world of ideas and perspectives. You become a more well-rounded and creative professional.

- **Change up your routine.** Try job-shadowing someone from a different discipline. Pick a task you do daily and work backwards. Do something creative, such as painting or drawing. Work on a side project you enjoy, preferably with no deadlines. Refinish that old piece of furniture you've been eyeing. Handwrite cards to people who mean the world to you, just to say hello or thank you.
- **Do research.** Put that first MARKENDIUM book (SMPS Domain of Practice #1, Marketing Research) to good use. Conduct research on topics related to your work. It's one of the simplest, yet often overlooked, steps to take to increase your knowledge. Use the search bar to your advantage. On a personal level, seek out educational entertainment. Take a class or join a webinar. Find a podcast that inspires you. Create a mindset of expanding your circle of exposure.
- **Just take the first step.** Oftentimes, all that's needed to spark creativity is just to start. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when faced with a large, challenging task, such as completing a pursuit with a 100-page limit. However, when you chip away at it, one piece at a time, creativity seems to jump in when you need it the most.



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When you do find that inspiration, write down your ideas so they don't get lost and they're easily accessible when you need them the next time. I use my smartphone's note feature to document when inspiration strikes. Others keep journals or notepads by their nightstand. An additional bonus of this process is that it promotes better sleep. When an idea comes in the middle of the night, or when I just can't stop thinking about my long task list for tomorrow, I take out my phone and jot down all those thoughts. Sleep comes more easily when your mind isn't racing.

Get out there, take risks, and step outside of your comfort zone. Creativity and inspiration are waiting for you. ■